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## WHITE HOUSE DENIES ASSASSINATION TRY

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# No plot, says Ron

By **BRUCE DRAKE**

News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Responding to revelations in the Bob Woodward book "Veil," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater yesterday said President Reagan has never approved any CIA or other U.S. involvement in attempted assassinations of foreign leaders.

"All I can say is the President never did, never has and never will authorize assassination, period," Fitzwater declared.

The Woodward book on the CIA says that then-Director William Casey set up a covert operation with the Saudi Arabian intelligence service aimed at assassinating Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadhallah, leader of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah faction in Lebanon.

Fadhallah and his group were suspected by the U.S. of being behind a series of bombings of American facilities in Beirut.

The attempt to get the Shiite leader failed and instead resulted in the deaths of 80 people when a car bomb

meant for him exploded in a Beirut suburb in 1985, Woodward wrote.

Woodward also wrote that Reagan told top officials not to "worry about the assassination problem" when they were planning a possible attack on Libya in 1985 to punish it for its role in terrorist activities.

Reagan purportedly said he "would personally take the heat on that if Khadafy were killed" in any attack, according to Woodward's book.

Asked about the alleged plot aimed at Fadhallah, Fitzwater noted that Reagan has signed an executive order forbidding U.S. involvement in assassinations and said: "Clearly the President was never aware of, never authorized any assassination efforts."

He also refused to comment on the unflattering view Casey supposedly held about Reagan—seeing him as a passive and indecisive President.

"Casey found Reagan strange," Woodward wrote. "Reagan had said he would

have stayed in the movies if he had been more successful at it."

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia also denied the allegation that it was involved in the attempt to kill Fadhallah or—as Woodward also reported—that it paid him a \$2 million bribe, with Casey's blessings, to stop attacking Western targets.

The Saudis published a statement in Beirut newspapers yesterday calling the accounts "baseless."

On other matters, Fitzwater appeared to dispute Woodward's assertion that Reagan's recovery from the 1981 assassination attempt was slower—and more worrisome to his top aides—than previously thought.

"The President's recovered, and he recovered rather quickly, and he's done a great job and that's it," Fitzwater declared. His view was echoed yesterday by Reagan's former physician, Dr. Daniel Ruge, who called Woodward's description of a severely debilitated Reagan "not true.... I think his recovery was superb."